



# Department of Justice

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July 8, 2010			PHONE: (813) 274-6136	
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## **PINELLAS MAN SENTENCED FOR MAIL FRAUD AND TAX FRAUD**

Tampa, Florida - U.S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that U.S. District Judge James S. Moody, Jr. yesterday sentenced Joseph Christopher Hooker (age 41, of Tierra Verde, Florida) to 57 months in federal prison for mail fraud and tax fraud. The court also ordered Hooker to pay restitution in the amount of \$2,478,423.98 to Mr. Roger William Erdelac, owner of Blue Hawaiian Products, and \$ 819,426 to the Internal Revenue Service. Hooker had pleaded guilty in October 2009.

According to court documents, from approximately 2002 to November 2006, Hooker, along with another individual, Jack Shaw, executed a scheme to defraud Blue Hawaiian Products, a company that manufactured and sold fiberglass swimming pool shells. Hooker acquired customer checks that had been sent by private and interstate carriers and made payable to his employer, Blue Hawaiian Products, and Shaw opened a business checking account in the name of Blue Hawaiian Pools and Supplies into which the checks were deposited. Hooker then prepared fraudulently altered Blue Hawaiian invoices reflecting substantially lower purchase prices than the true invoices and Shaw purchased cashier checks for the lower prices from the fraudulent account and remitted them to Blue Hawaiian Products in payment of the fraudulent invoice.

Hooker also caused fraudulent 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 Federal Individual Income Tax Returns, Forms 1040, to be prepared and filed with the IRS that omitted Hooker's proceeds from the scheme.

This case was investigated by Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert T. Monk.